



PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MILTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02186

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To: Milton Public School Parents, Guardians & Staff
From: Mary C. Gormley, Superintendent of Schools
Re: E-Update, February 10, 2009

From the Office of the Superintendent

Dear Parents, Guardians, Teachers and Staff,

While the plants and trees rest during the cold months of January, February and March, teaching and learning are alive and thriving in each of Milton's classrooms. As a teacher, I found that students made their greatest educational gains during these important winter months. From the 288 students enrolled in our system-wide, fee-based, Full-Day Kindergarten Program, to the more than 230 seniors who are applying to colleges and universities and awaiting their acceptances, every Milton Public School student is fully engaged in outstanding educational programming and after-school activities, clubs and athletics.

At last week's Kindergarten Information Night, I told the parents that we are beginning a thirteen-year relationship. The home and the school must work together to develop strong partnerships on behalf of each child. I encourage every Milton Public School parent, guardian and teacher to build these partnerships and to maintain two-way communication.

Parent-Teacher Conferences are optional during this term and are scheduled this week for every teacher in every school. Even though the conferences are optional, I encourage all to schedule conferences with your child's teacher or teachers during this week or the weeks following vacation. You, your child and our teachers benefit from these valuable mid-year conferences. – Mary Gormley

Curriculum News

Congratulations are in order for this year's senior class at Milton High School. Many members of the Class of 2009 have already received some outstanding offers of admission from many prestigious colleges and universities through early decision and early action plans.

"Overall, more students applied to more – in some cases many more – colleges and universities under a variety of early plans than ever before," says Ken Aubert, Director of Guidance at Milton High School. "Increased applications mean decreased acceptances. Now, less selective schools are selective and the most selective schools are in the stratosphere. Through our group guidance classes, we are helping students to create lists with a reasonable number and range of schools and this is reflected in their rate of acceptances."

Thus far, in addition to all of the Massachusetts state colleges and universities, members of the senior class applying under these plans have been accepted to a variety of highly competitive schools including:

Assumption College, Bentley College, Boston College, Boston University, Catholic University, Colgate University, Columbia University, Dartmouth College, Drexel College, Embry-Riddle University, Emerson

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College, Fairfield University, Fordham University, Illinois Wesleyan University, Lafayette College, Maine Maritime Academy, Marietta College, Mass. College of Pharmacy, Merrimack College, Mount Holyoke College, Northeastern University, Penn State University, Providence College, Simmons College, St. Anselm College, St. John's University, NY, St. Joseph's College, CT, St. Michael's College, Suffolk University, Temple University, Tulane University, U. S. Coast Guard Academy, University of Colorado, University of North Carolina, University of Vermont, Wentworth University and Wheaton College.

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts recently released data on graduation rates. Among the data was the finding that more than 81 percent of students who entered high school as ninth graders in 2004 graduated in 2008, marking the second year in a row the state's four-year, on-time graduation rate has increased. Statewide, more than 80 percent of students graduated in four years. We are pleased to report that, in Milton, that figure – the “four year graduation rate,” -- was even higher, at 91.1%.

According to the statewide results, students who remained in the same high school all four years fared better than their more transient peers: statewide, 86.2 percent of students who attended only one high school graduated in four years, as compared to students who attended two schools (58.7 percent), three schools (39.7 percent), or four or more schools (28 percent). Again, Milton's graduation rate – for the entire class -- consistently ranks well above the state average at 91.6 percent for the past three years. In addition, the graduation rate of students who attended Milton High School for their entire four years was close to 100%.

School Committee Update

*There have been four School Committee meetings since my last E-blast. They have been summarized below. Our next meeting will be **February 10th at 6 p.m.** at Town Hall. All SC meetings are carried live on Channels 8 and 22 – replay times and dates are posted on the school website at www.miltonps.org under the “School Committee” heading.*

January 6th

Our new grant writer, Christopher Masalsky, was introduced at this SC meeting. He told the committee that he looks forward to working with the Milton community and invited parents and residents to contact him with any grant-related opportunities at cmasalsky@miltonps.org

Pierce Site Council member Meg Kasuba, along with Principal James Jette and Assistant Principal Dr. Karen Spaulding, discussed the School Improvement Plan for Pierce Middle School. Among the programs highlighted was the new Saturday program, funded by the Copeland Family Foundation, which will give support in math and reading to those students who may be having difficulty in these areas. Family Math Night, a teacher mentoring program, professional development and Learning Walks were also among the topics highlighted.

Collicot Site Council: Principal Jerry Schultz, accompanied by teacher Cathy Caccamo and parent Patty Elliot, presented a draft copy of the Collicot School Improvement Plan. They highlighted the school's parent-run math clubs for grades 2, 3, 4 and 5, which meet once a week before school to work on Continental Math and Problem Solving. They also discussed this year's integrated fourth grade math program (mixing English and French students), which has been working well this year. One of the goals for next year is to have all Special Education students assigned to regular education classrooms, with provisions for enhanced instruction.

Budget: The finance subcommittee and the administration announced a special meeting on Wednesday, January 14th to present a level-dollar budget. An explanation of what a level-dollar budget would mean to the Milton Public Schools followed. The reduction could result in the elimination of over 40 current staff members, which could have very serious consequences on class size, high school probation and could mean the closing of an elementary school.

January 14th

This was a special school committee meeting called on a Wednesday night specifically to discuss the budget situation for next year. A presentation was made which is available on-line, detailing the effects of a level-funded budget. Among the cuts that would need to be made are:

Milton High:	5.0 classroom teachers
	1.0 guidance counselor
	.5 guidance secretary
	.8 main office secretary
	1.0 librarian
Pierce Middle School:	1.0 librarian
	1.0 art teacher, resulting in elimination of ACE
	1.0 computer teacher
	3.0 classroom teachers
	.5 physical education teacher
	1.0 language teacher
Elementary Schools:	9.0 classroom teachers
	.5 nurse
	1.0 Special Education chair
	1.5 custodians
	.5 elementary specialist
	1.0 elementary secretary
System-Wide	1.0 facilities rental coordinator
	3.0 special education positions – restructuring
	1.0 inclusion specialist
	8.0 educational assistants
	.4 administrative restructure
	.5 assistant principal
	1.0 principal

These cuts are severe and would result in the closure of an elementary school, a substantial rise in class sizes system wide and other negative consequences. After the presentation, the School Committee held an additional Citizen Speak session, where residents voiced their thoughts and asked questions about the budget issue. These questions were posted, along with answers, on our website under the “School Committee” category, then the “News” heading.

January 20th

This meeting also focused primarily on budget issues. Some additional details, including budget summary additions, which included mandated budget assumptions, were presented. In addition, the salaries and projected increase for every Milton Public School employee was outlined and presented in a spreadsheet.

Our Athletic Director Steve Traister presented an athletic spending review, an FYO9 spending plan summary and a year-to-date analysis of where every dollar of the athletic budget is allocated.

Glover School Site Council: Principal Dr. Dore Korschun introduced parent representatives Susan Coakley, Emily Macallaney, and Miguel Rosado. The group discussed the Open Response initiative implemented across the district for grades K-5, which should help to improve MCAS scores and the Tufts Readers’ Workshop initiative. Furthermore, they noted that Glover has added one extra science classroom and plans to continue their partnership with Trailside Museum. They also hope to continue providing a WISP Fellow to work with the 5th grade teachers. In addition to the co-taught classrooms for grades 1-3, this year Glover added a ½ day co-taught classroom for grade 4 to meet the special needs of some grade 4 students. Dr. Korschun discussed how senior citizens from the community come to the school to volunteer. These volunteers assist in the office and also go into classrooms to read to students.

Milton High School Site Council also gave a presentation. Principal Dr. John Drottar, along with student Michelle Nabi, teacher Cathy Queally, and parent Chris Navin addressed a variety of topics at the High School,

such as communication with families, ways to create a welcoming atmosphere at the High School, and student performance. A parent workshop was held at the beginning of the year and another will be scheduled in February. Mr. Navin reported that as a spin-off of the Site Council, a Diversity Committee has been developed. This committee consists of students, parents, faculty, and administrators, and they have met three times this year. Dr. Drottar also explained the mentoring program, in which teachers are paired up with students to meet during the activity period in order to provide encouragement and support. In addition to the parent workshop, Dr. Drottar explained that they also have provided enhanced orientation programming, program of studies nights, teacher/parent conferences, and Guidance nights in the effort to encourage parental involvement. Ms. Queally stated that the February parent workshop may be held on the same night as parent/teacher conferences, since parents will already be in the building. The Site Council and the Diversity Committee encourage attendance at this workshop.

School Choice: There was some discussion as to whether Milton should pursue the option of participating in a school choice plan. This allows school districts the option of enrolling students from outside the district in their schools. The “home” district would receive money from the “sending” district to defray the cost. The administration will continue to research this option.

February 3rd

Our most recent school committee meeting covered a great deal of ground. First, our World Language Department Head Gracie Burke introduced some visiting teachers from France, who are in Milton to observe elementary- and middle-school classrooms. The teachers, from various parts of France, said they were grateful for this “good opportunity” to be in American schools and said they were “surprised” by the caliber of instruction in Milton’s French Immersion program.

Next, our Guidance Department Head Ken Aubert, discussed college admissions and course selection procedures. First, he said that his office has processed nearly 1,400 applications so far this year and expects to complete nearly 2,000 by the end of the school year. High school seniors complete anywhere from 1 to 20 applications each. He announced that a college fair designed for eleventh-graders will be held on April 6th during the school day. Mr. Aubert also discussed the course selection procedure and how the master schedule is built. He took questions from school committee members about the possibility of waiving physical education class requirements for student-athletes; eliminating class rank; and the feasibility of a universal application process for students applying to colleges.

Emily Innes of the town of Milton’s Planning Board came to the meeting to discuss a questionnaire that will be posted online on the town’s master plan. Ms. Innes came to see if the School Committee would like to submit any items that could be put on the questionnaire, which will gauge where to focus the attention of the master plan. If the Planning Board votes to proceed, Ms. Innes will make the announcement at the Special Town Meeting.

Next, a motion was made that the School Committee recommends the Warrant Committee to present at Town Meeting a contingent budget in addition to a level funded (balanced) budget.

Finally, it was announced at this meeting that Paul Hilton, our Assistant Superintendent for Business, will be leaving Milton in June to accept a job with the Cape Cod Collaborative. Best wishes to Paul on his new position.

Recent Activities

We recently hosted our annual Information Nights for parents of students who will be attending Kindergarten or Grade One in Fall of 2009. These sessions were very well attended by hundreds of parents. Kindergarten screenings were successfully completed last week and went very smoothly. For those who were unable to attend the Information Night, the information is posted on our website www.miltonps.org under the Contents heading “Kindergarten Registration Information.” Please call to make an appointment for screening, if you have not already done so.

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The Pierce Players did a fantastic job with their most recent production, “The Secret School.” All performances were well-attended and the cast, crew and producers deserve a round of applause for their hard work.

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A group of Milton musicians recently returned from the Berklee Jazz Festival with some good news. The MHS Jazz Ensemble and Jazz Combo each earned sixth place and Matt Kelly won awards for solo trumpet in both ensembles! Congratulations to the students and to director Rebecca Damiani.

Five students from Pierce Middle School were accepted to the Junior District Music Festival: Anna Folcarelli and Kali Guise in orchestra; Rebecca Simms in band; and Jen Gemma and Eliza Trickett in chorus. Nine students from Milton High School were accepted to the Jr. District Music Festival--Brendan Hayward and Amelie Carpenter in orchestra; Laura Hess in band; and Adam Hanna, Rebecca Liberman, Nancy Killoran, Leah Hainline, Cristina Ruscito and Talia Nutting in chorus. Bravo to these hard-working, talented students, who will participate in the Junior District Festival in March.

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It is with great pleasure that I am able to inform you of the recent recognition some of our art students received from The Boston Globe Scholastic Art Awards organization.

Seven students on the secondary level were awarded prizes in this highly competitive and prestigious exhibition, held each year at the Transportation Building in Boston. Linda Ly and Elizabeth O’Connor, both Grade 11 students, were awarded Honorable Mentions. Clayton Baker, Grade 8, and Luke Pastore, Grade 7, were awarded Silver Key awards, and Elizabeth Hiss, Ken-Lee Mercury, and Philip Wikina, all Grade 8, were awarded Honorable Mentions.

The Globe Scholastics is connected to the nationally-recognized Alliance for Young Artists and Writers and strives to recognize excellence in the Visual Arts by students in public and private schools throughout the Commonwealth. Thousands of pieces of student art are judged, and only a small percentage receives the coveted Gold and Silver Key awards. While there were more Honorable Mention awards given, even to be acknowledged among such impressive and numerous entrants is remarkable. We can certainly be proud of the accomplishments of our students, our teachers, and our program.

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Parents of current eighth-grade students – and those who intend to transfer to Milton High this fall -- were invited to attend the Milton High School Program of Studies Night on **Monday, February 9th** at 7:00 pm in the Milton High School Auditorium.

This was an information session for parents of all incoming high school students (grades 9-12) who wanted to learn about the course selection process. The program also reviewed leveling practices as well as graduation and college entrance requirements.

Parents of current eighth grade students were encouraged to attend. Administrators, department heads, and guidance counselors were available to answer questions at the conclusion of the formal presentation.

For more information, please contact the MHS guidance office at 617-696-4470.

Upcoming Events

Parents are reminded that **February 11th** will be an early release day for students. Parent-Teacher conferences will be taking place during the afternoon and evening hours for elementary and middle school students. Parents of Milton High School students also have an option to schedule conferences on **February 12th** in the afternoon and evening. If you have not scheduled a time with your child’s teacher and would like to request a conference, please contact the teacher directly.

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The Milton Public Schools recently received word from our town's Library Director Philip McNulty, that a date has been set for the opening of the Milton Library's main branch on Canton Avenue. There will be an invitational opening reception the evening of **April 1st** for donors and officials. Library operations will begin on **Thursday, April 2nd**, at which time the library will be open to the public. A dedication ceremony will be held on **Sunday April 5th**. This is exciting news for our town and our students, who will help to celebrate this event.

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Registration for Adult Education classes will be held on **February 9th, 10th and 11th** in the Milton High School lobby from 6 to 9 p.m. The spring brochure with course offerings is available on the website at www.miltonps.org under the "News" heading.

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Milton High School students will present an evening of Cabaret on **Tuesday, February 10th** at the MHS auditorium. Tickets are \$5 and all proceeds will go towards a student trip to New York City.

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Another reminder: February vacation will begin on **Monday, February 16th**. Students will return to school on **Monday, Feb. 23rd**.

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A date has been set for the Milton Public Schools Faculty & Staff Talent Show! This is sure to be a night to remember, so mark your calendars for Thursday, **March 12th at 7 p.m.** in the Milton High auditorium.

We don't want to ruin any surprises, but Dr. Noreen Diamond Burdett has begun scheduling some acts, including a dog act, an Irish step dance team, a Guitar Hero demonstration, some singing, music, skits, stand-up comedy acts. You won't believe your eyes!

Tickets are \$10 at the door and proceeds will benefit MHS sports and activities.

Fundraising News

Nearly 300 Milton High School students crowded into the Copeland Field House as part of the Walkathon Fundraiser to support Milton High School Sports, Clubs and Activities. Students walked and danced around the indoor track for two hours to tunes pumped in by DJ and MHS alumni Frank Benway. The throng of walkers was so large, it filled half of the indoor track. **Approximately \$28,000 will be raised when all pledges are collected.** What an accomplishment!

The **Milton High School Boosters**, with the able leadership of Jerry Cahalane, donated the concession stand profits from the event. **Fitness Unlimited** generously provided 25 cases of water to refresh all of the walkers. **FAME, FAVA and Drama Parent Volunteers** coordinated by Karen Friedman-Hanna, Joan Clifford and Cynthia Winston, prepared and sold an enormous amount of baked goods with all proceeds donated to the Walkathon effort. In all, more than 85 parents helped in this effort. They were joined by teachers, administrators, staff and coaches.

According to Laura Kessler who joined with fellow parents Kristan Bagley- Jones and Don Jones to organize the first MHS Walkathon, "the best part of the Walkathon was the positive response of the student body which took personal responsibility to secure and collect pledges and created a successful outcome for everyone. The students weren't asking someone else to step up – they did it themselves. The students were a community in service to each other."

At the end of the Walkathon, MHS Principal Dr. John Drottar viewed the crowd of walkers and told the students that “this was a great example of citizenship in action. Each student walked to help a fellow student fund the interest that had meaning to them. Congratulations to everyone; especially the Milton community who supported our students every step of the way.”

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Another successful fundraiser, our MHS Sponsorships/Sale of Banners in the Copeland Field House is being chaired by Milton High School parent, Kate Sumner. Banners will be sold through the end of February and are still available by contacting Dr. John Drottar at Milton High School, jdrottar@miltonps.org. We plan to begin hanging the 22 banners already purchased this week, and the remaining banners will be up by the end of the month. More information can be found on our website www.miltonps.org Click on News; then “Save Spring Sports” to download our brochure.

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A very entertaining night of comedy was held at the Hoosic Club this past weekend. Leslie Durgin and Debbie Higgins along with John and Laura Phelan helped to organize and spread the word about this fundraiser. The event was very well attended and featured not only a stand-out comic, Mike Petit, but also raffles, music and dancing. **The event raised \$13,800 for Milton High School Athletics.** Thank you and Congratulations to All!

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Be sure your passports are valid. A raffle to win a trip for four to Ireland is underway. Thanks to the generosity of Milton Public School parents Denis and Mary Keohane, this fundraising raffle’s prize is a three bedroom cottage in Kinsale, County Cork, Ireland, along with two rounds of golf and roundtrip airfare. Tickets, at \$20 each or 6 for \$100, are selling fast. The winner’s name will be announced on **March 20th** at Common Market in Quincy. Raffle tickets can be purchased at any of the Milton Public Schools. Other prizes include Celtics and Red Sox tickets, compliments of Corcoran Brokerage. For more information, contact Alan Cron acron@miltonps.org or Jackie Morgan jmorgan@miltonps.org. NOTE: To complete this package (and maximize the funding for school activities and athletics) we are seeking a donation of four airline tickets or a donation of frequent flyer miles. Please contact Alan Cron if you can help us with this important donation.

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Here’s a great story about our tight-knit Milton Public School community: Recently some students at Collicot Elementary School, after hearing about the difficult financial situation regarding spring sports and activities at MHS, decided they wanted to help out. A group of fifth-grade students asked if they could organize a project to help fundraise for this cause. The students came up with the idea of holding a “Hat Day,” at school and “charged” students who chose to wear a hat that day.

In the end, the students raised \$1,142.00 for their fellow students. In addition to doing a good deed and helping others, their teachers, Anne McIntyre and Tom Mullen, made sure the students had an opportunity to learn. The classes were required to calculate the totals and figure out which percentage of each classroom participated. Kudos to all involved in this project!

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With all this fundraising news, we would like to mention yet another way parents and community members can help our school department. Our new grant writer, Christopher Masalsky, encourages all our supporters to investigate matching gifts. Please see his memo below:

Would you like to make your donation to the Milton Foundation for Education work harder? If your company has a matching gift program, you can double the impact of your contribution and further enhance the educational experience for Milton's students.

Matching your gift is easy. To find out if your company has a matching gift program, contact your human resources department, or visit the [Matching Gift Search Page of the Milton Grants website](#). Most companies

have a short form for you to complete and send in with your donation, and some have forms you can submit online. That's all there is to it! The Milton Foundation for Education will do the rest.

Thousands of companies around the country offer matching gift programs. Some firms also provide grants in honor of their employees' volunteer service - you can [find out more about some of the area's corporate giving programs by clicking here](#). If you volunteer in the Milton Public Schools, your company may make a donation on your behalf!

Asking your company to match your donation is a "win-win" all around - your gift is doubled, and they receive a tax deduction for their contribution to our mission. Thank you for your support of the Milton Foundation for Education - together we can make a difference in the lives of Milton's children!

Milton Public Schools Ambassadors Page

Student Highlight: Three of Milton High's top music students, **Marline Alexis, Elaine Daiber and Charlie Rosmarin** recently competed at the Massachusetts All State Music Festival and were recognized for their extraordinary talent.

After a round of auditions, Marline and Elaine were selected to participate in the All State Chorus, and Charlie was selected to play in the All State Orchestra. The concert will be held at Symphony Hall in March.

"This really is very prestigious," said Dr. Diamond Burdett. "It's a great honor to make it and also to perform at Symphony Hall. It doesn't get any better than that."

These MHS students competed against students from the entire state at this prestigious festival on January 24th. We are proud of their accomplishments.

Teacher Highlight: Hats off to **Dale Snyder**, Milton High teacher and track coach extraordinaire. Mr. Snyder was recently elected to the Massachusetts State Track Coaches Association Hall of Fame. A coach at MHS for 23 years, Mr. Snyder has coached both boys' and girls' cross-country teams, indoor track and outdoor track. In the past year, his girls' cross-country team achieved an 11-0 record and won the All-State title and Bay State Conference. This winter, the girls' indoor team recently won the Herget Division for Indoor Track. In the course of his career, Mr. Snyder has coached as many as 14 conference champion teams. A plaque with his name on it will be installed at the Reggie Lewis Track in Boston; and an Induction Banquet will be held on **April 8th** at Lantana's in Randolph. This is a great honor for one of our own.

Volunteer Highlight: I could add another entire page to this newsletter, thanking the countless volunteers who have worked tirelessly to help fund our Spring Sports, Clubs and Activities. From the moment it was announced that the money needed to be raised, to the day we reached our goal, hundreds of parents, students, teachers and community members put in thousands of collective hours to fulfill this mission. From the Swing for Sports fundraiser in the fall, to the Comedy Night, Walk-a-Thon, Banners, Irish Raffle and Hat Day at Collicot, to the upcoming Faculty & Staff Talent Show, it seems everybody has pitched in. It truly has been a community-wide effort and I thank you all for your time.

Calendar of Events

Please be sure to visit the District-wide calendar located at www.miltonps.org.